

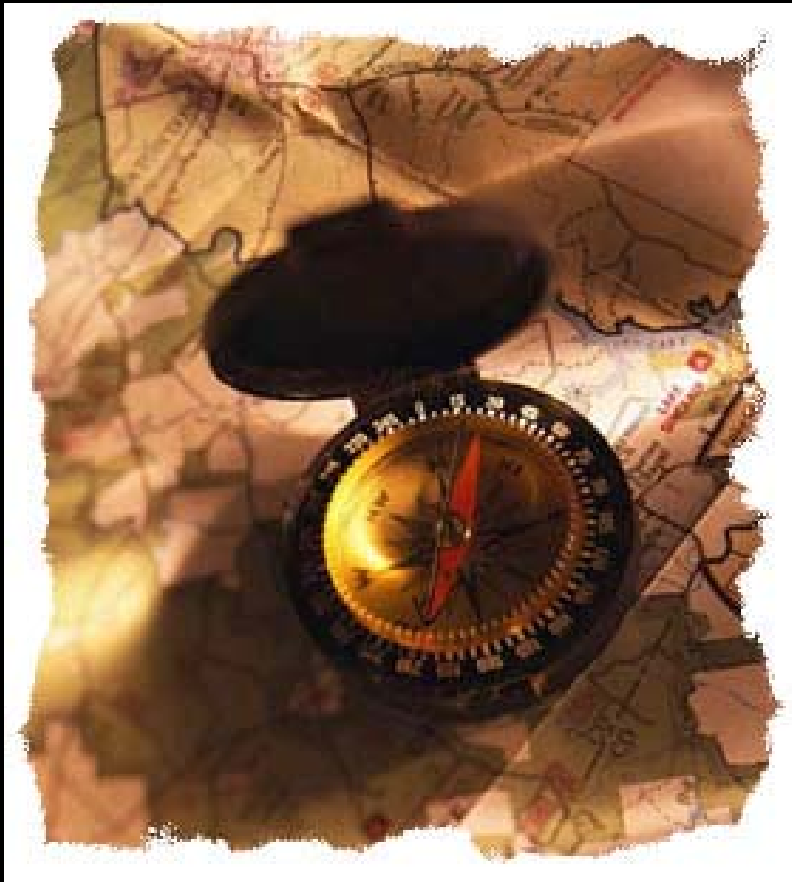
Department-Level Data Collection and Use

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Three Research Projects

- Four department attrition study
- *At Cross Purposes*
 - National survey of graduate students
 - www.phd-survey.org
- Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate
 - *The Formation of Scholars*, fall 2007
 - www.carnegiefoundation.org/cid

Premises



- The department is the unit of action and analysis
- Disciplines differ
- Departmental practices and culture matter and can be influenced

Methods

- Four department attrition study
- “At Cross Purposes” study
- Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate
- Brief ethnography of departmental culture; attrited student interviews; common themes
- 20-page survey: 4114 students, 11 disciplines, 27 universities
- CF: observations, surveys, reports
Depts: surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings

Findings



- Integration into intellectual community
- Mentoring and advising
- Information flows and feedback

Integration into intellectual community



- Advance information
- Orientation
- Peer mentors
- Initial advising
- Shared courses
- Shared office space

Mentoring and advising



- Frequency of communication
- Multiple mentors
- Annual reviews
- Safety nets

Information flows and feedback



- How is graduate school different from undergraduate
- Clear expectations for & access to experiences
- Career paths of alumni

Data Collection: Recommendations



- Define purpose
 - Document and assess
 - Impel change
 - Inform direction of change
- Keep It Manageable (KIM) *(thanks Clarice)*

Data Collection: Challenges



- Identifying departmental personnel
- Differences between departments
- Difficult to know what is “really” happening in the department

Data Interpretation and Use: Recommendations



- Don't just report, offer analysis
- Create a storyline
- Use stories and examples as evidence
- Use data as starting point for asking questions

Questions to ask from data

- Does the department have a vibrant intellectual community?
- How are new students (postdocs, faculty) integrated into the departmental community?
- Does the department have a shared definition of “a successful student”? Are these expectations clearly conveyed to students?
- What career paths do program graduates follow? Are students gaining the experiences to be successful in their chosen career paths?

Data Use: Challenges



- Expect challenges to credibility of data
 - Doesn't match beliefs
 - Small sample sizes
 - Qualitative data often seems anecdotal
- Long time frames: department today is not the department of the data
- Impact of changes in departmental practices and culture are hard to assess